



# Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Joseph H. Hogsett  
Southern District of Indiana**

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## **HOGSETT ANNOUNCES MORE RESULTS IN VIOLENT CRIME INITIATIVE, REAFFIRMS DEDICATION TO EVANSVILLE AREA**

*Local man to face prosecution as part of U.S. Attorney's Violent Crime Initiative*

### **PRESS RELEASE**

EVANSVILLE – In the last two years, the United States Attorney's Office and other federal agencies have placed a renewed emphasis on their efforts in Evansville and throughout Southwestern Indiana. These efforts include the creation of an Evansville-based federal grand jury, the appointment of the first Evansville-based leadership within the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the creation of a Violent Crime Initiative aimed at using federal resources to assist local law enforcement in prosecuting violent, habitual offenders.

Just two weeks ago, more progress was made in the announcement that the Evansville branch of the U.S. Attorney's Office has hired a new federal prosecutor to assist in local prosecutions. Assistant U.S. Attorney Lauren Wheatley, a southern Indiana native, most recently served as a Deputy Prosecutor at the Vanderburgh County Prosecutor's Office under Prosecutor Nick Herman.

This afternoon, Joseph H. Hogsett, the United States Attorney, announced the federal indictment of Robert J. Kester, age 29, of Posey County, on charges that he illegally possessed a .380 caliber semi-automatic pistol after having been convicted of numerous felonies. Those past convictions include 2009 charges in Posey County for dealing methamphetamine, as well as a 2006 charge of resisting law enforcement in Vanderburgh County.

"Our Violent Crime Initiative aims to do one thing, and one thing only: take the worst of the worst off the streets of southwestern Indiana," Hogsett said. "This latest conviction reiterates our dedication to stamping out violent crime through the aggressive federal prosecution of repeat, violent offenders. Just as important, it also represents the first indictment as a result of our

expanded prosecution team here in Evansville.”

Announced in March of 2011, the Violent Crime Initiative (VCI) represents a district-wide strategy to work with local law enforcement and county prosecutors to combat drug traffickers and criminals that use and carry firearms in their illegal activities. In the first nine months of the initiative, the VCI produced a dramatic increase in the number of gun-related charges brought federally – from just 14 felony possession charges in 2010 to 103 last year.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lauren Wheatley and Todd Shellenbarger, who are prosecuting the case for the government, on January 8, 2012, law enforcement found Kester to be in possession of a semi-automatic .380 caliber pistol. As a convicted felon, Kester had no legal right to possess that weapon. If convicted, he could face up to ten years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

This prosecution was the result of a collaborative investigation as part of the U.S. Attorney’s Violent Crime Initiative, which included significant assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, as well as the Evansville FBI Safe Streets Task Force, the Indiana State Police, and the Mount Vernon Police Department.

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